

MISSISSIPPI ASSOCIATION OF DRUG COURT PROFESSIONALS

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



It is my pleasure to introduce the first MADCP newsletter to all our membership, legislators, judges and interested readers.

As the excitement surrounding drug courts in our state grows, I find myself in a unique position as an employee with the Department of Corrections, to be on the forefront of this latest alternative to incarceration. I encourage each of you to embrace this innovative program and to work toward increasing the number of drug courts throughout our state.

In lean budget times, drug court as an alternative to incarceration is particularly attractive not only in terms of dollars saved, but also because statistically, this program has a proven track record for success. *Corrections Forum* published an article in the May/June issue entitled "Alternatives" in which drug courts were praised as an exam-

ple of programs that are working. According to the National Drug Court Institute, "Drug courts represent the coordinated efforts of the judiciary, prosecutors, defense bar, probation, law enforcement, mental health, social services and treatment communities to actively and forcefully intervene and break the cycle of substance abuse, addiction and crime."

One of the most unique aspects of drug court is that it is a perfect fit for all arenas of the criminal justice system. Drug courts are appropriate for juvenile and adult offenders, felony and misdemeanor cases, and state, local and municipal courts.

On a personal note, I would like to thank each of the members who worked tirelessly for several months to plan our first statewide training conference. Congratulations on a job well done! I appreciate your dedication and support of the association. The conference will be an annual event. We are already making plans for the Second Annual MADCP Training

Conference, which is scheduled for May 3-5, 2006, at Grand Casino Oasis in Gulfport.

I would like to add a special note of thanks to our first President, Hinds County Court Judge Mike Parker. Under the capable leadership of Judge Parker, the association was established and chartered, beginning a legacy that will prosper with the continued success of drug courts.

The 2005-2006 MADCP Officers and Board of Directors, by unanimous vote, have honored Rep. Alyce Griffin Clarke and Judge Keith Starret with the first two Honorary Memberships to MADCP. Rep. Clarke was instrumental in the passage of Drug Court legislation in our state and Judge Starrett established the first felony drug court in Mississippi in 1999. On behalf of the Board of Directors and MADCP membership, please join me in congratulating Rep. Clarke and Judge Starrett.

Christy Gutherz
President

SUGGESTIONS?

HELP NAME THE MADCP NEWSLETTER!

Please e-mail suggestions to jcraft@mssc.state.ms.us



DRUG COURT MOVEMENT SPREADS IN MISSISSIPPI

During the past six years the drug court movement has grown in Mississippi to include 13 active programs and seven drug courts in the planning stages. It's part of a national movement that started in Miami in 1989. Former Circuit Judge Keith Starrett started the state's first felony adult drug court in the 14th District in 1999.

John P. Walters, director of Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), said, "Drug treatment courts are now a national phenomenon. They are an effective way of reducing the drug problem in America. By giving judges the power to refer people to treatment, we reduce criminal recidivism, save taxpay-

ers money, and heal those who have become enslaved to drug addiction."

Recent national research has shown that in a sample of 17,000 drug court graduates, only 16.4 percent had been rearrested on felony charges within a year. Drug courts also save money in incarceration costs.

NATIONAL DRUG COURT LEADER ADDRESSES GRADUATION IN 4TH DISTRICT DRUG COURT

Karen Freeman-Wilson, chief executive officer of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals and executive director of the National Drug Court Institute in Alexandria, Va., was the keynote speaker July 18 at the 4th Circuit District Drug Court graduation in Indianola.

Eight people graduated in the ceremony presided over by Circuit Judge Ashley Hines. Eight have previously graduated from the program, which has been in operation

since 2003. The district includes Leflore, Sunflower and Washington counties. Forty-eight people are enrolled in the program.

Freeman-Wilson is a leading national advocate of treating drug addiction that is the underlying cause of many crimes. Freeman-Wilson calls the drug court model “coerced treatment.”

Freeman-Wilson has served as chief executive officer of the National Association of Drug Court Profes-

sionals and executive director of the National Drug Court Institute since 2001. She served as a Gary, Ind., city court judge 1994-2000, where she presided over that city’s drug court from its inception in 1996.

Freeman-Wilson previously served as attorney general of Indiana, director of the Indiana Office of Drug Control Policy, executive director of the Indiana Civil Rights Commission, as a deputy prosecutor and as a public defender.



Karen Freeman-Wilson

8TH CIRCUIT DRUG COURT TESTS INNOVATIVE APPROACHES

With nearly 50 clients enrolled in the 8th District Drug Court, new innovations are being tested. Drug Court Administrator Marcus Ellis said some select probation violators may soon be getting a second chance in Drug Court in Leake, Scott, Neshoba and Newton counties.

The innovation is among several adopted by Circuit Judge Vernon Cotton. Ellis said the response from officials with other drug courts has been positive.

Ellis said, “We looked at the individuals who violated probation and were returning to prison. A fair number of them were violating for drug charges.”

Ellis and Judge Cotton met with Department of Corrections Commissioner Chris

Epps and other correctional officials on June 29. Epps’ response was favorable.

“In that meeting, the context was parolees, probationers and violators of probation,” Ellis said. Probation violators could be reviewed to determine if they would otherwise qualify for drug court.

Parolees were quickly ruled out. Courts don’t have jurisdiction over them.

Drug Court gives non-violent drug offenders who are not accused of trafficking a chance to work out their personal problems. Allowing addicts to reassemble their lives outside of prison also saves taxpayers money.

Ellis said that principle can be applied to probationers.

“It gives the individual who needs help a chance to get

help. That’s going to save the taxpayers the annual cost of incarceration. It will impact favorably on recidivism,” Ellis said. Without intervention, “once these guys get out of prison, they’re going back to the same people, places and things. We teach them how to live without drugs.”

The next step will be writing a protocol to add select probation violators to the program, then getting the plan approved. Ellis said he would keep law enforcement officers involved by getting their input in who should be admitted to the program.

Drug Court officials are also pursuing an innovative approach to making the program pay for itself. If a Drug Court client fails to meet requirements, Ellis said, one

sanction includes short-term incarceration. Those jailed are required to pay the county where they are jailed \$22.50 a day to cover the cost of housing them. That is in addition to fines and costs.

The district is also testing self-reporting. Those sent to jail by court order are required to turn themselves in, saving the counties the expense of sending a deputy to search for the violator. That also allows violators who have made progress a way to pay for their mistakes without losing ground.

Other judges have made referrals. Circuit Judge Samac Richardson, presiding in Rankin County, ordered a Neshoba County drug offender to 8th District jurisdiction.

12TH CIRCUIT CELEBRATES DRUG COURT PARTICIPANTS' PROGRESS

Two-year-old Kaylee Dettbarn followed her mother across the stage as the 21-year-old recovering methamphetamine addict accepted a certificate marking her completion of the second phase of the 12th Circuit Court Adult Drug Court. Her father, Tim Dettbarn, 33, finished the first phase of the program.

Tim Dettbarn said getting help for his drug addiction has shifted his focus to his family. "I'm there for her," he said of the toddler. "Now I'm a father."

On May 20, in observation of National Drug Court Month, 12th Circuit Judge Robert Helfrich and Drug Court staff celebrated progress of 31 people who are enrolled in the program in Forrest and Perry counties.

Judge Helfrich reveled in the changes the treatment-oriented Drug Court program has made for children. "We have had four drug-free babies," Judge Helfrich said. He

noted that a fifth was due in a matter of days.

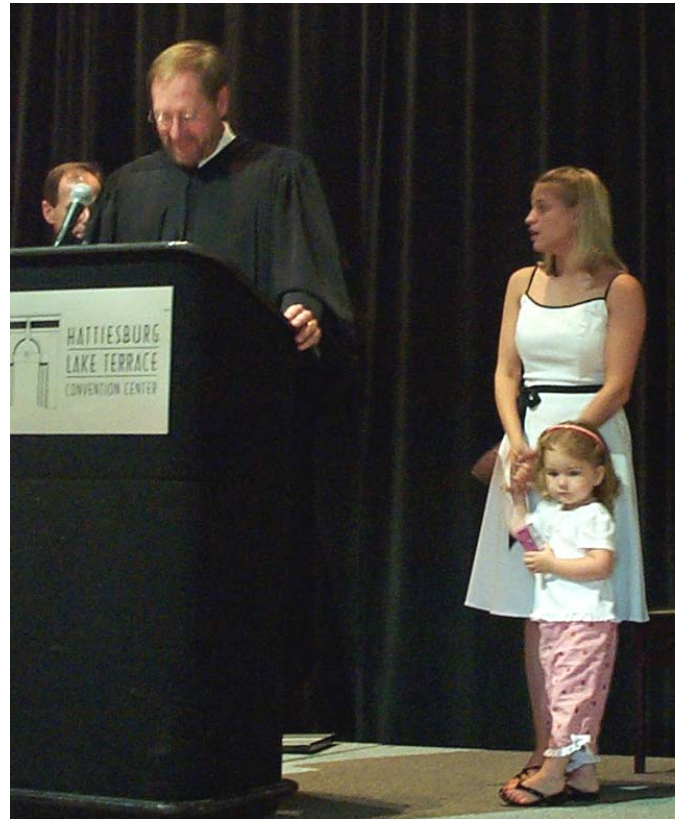
U.S. District Court Judge Keith Starrett, keynote speaker for the celebration in Hattiesburg, said drug addiction during pregnancy can cause a lifetime of problems for children. "A drug-addicted baby will cost society probably \$1 million during its lifetime," he said.

Judge Helfrich said it costs \$16,000 to \$17,000 a year to house a person in prison. Drug Court costs about \$1,500 a year per person.

"The bottom line is Drug Court not only saves money. It saves lives," he said.

The program, which began Oct. 8, 2003, requires a minimum of two years for completion, and can take up to five years.

During the ceremony at the Lake Terrace Convention Center, Judge Helfrich paid special tribute to Asbury Foundation President Bill Ray. The Drug Court program



Circuit Judge Robert Helfrich commends Lori Dettbarn for her Drug Court progress. Daughter Kaylee followed her to the stage.

for Forrest and Perry counties is funded for three years by a \$459,000 grant from the Asbury Foundation.

Judge Helfrich also paid tribute to Judge Starrett, who started the state's first felony adult drug court as a circuit judge in Lincoln, Pike and Walthall counties in 1999. Judge Helfrich visited the 14th District Drug Court program and used it as a model for his own.

Judge Starrett said, "He was like me, looking for a better way to do things. What we were doing in the criminal justice system was not working."

Judge Starrett told Drug Court participants that while they were surrounded during the ceremony by people who cheer them on and want them to succeed, "there are people in this world who want to see you fail. Your old drug dealer wants you back as a customer."

Judge Starrett said it takes discipline and determination to stick with the program and stay clean and sober. He encouraged them to learn from their mistakes. "It's simple, but not easy," he said. "Effort and hard work make up for a lot of shortcomings in your life."



Asbury Foundation President Bill Ray accepts a plaque from Circuit Judge Robert Helfrich.

DRUG COURT PARTICIPANTS RECOUNT STRUGGLES, CHANGED LIVES

Drug Court participants can tell powerful stories about their struggles with addiction.

The son of an undercover narcotics officer told of an addiction that began in childhood.

A mother of two talked about being so consumed by addiction that she didn't know where her children were.

"I smoked my first joint when I was 11 years old and I loved it," Brian Walsh, 35, of Brandon told a packed Hinds County courtroom at his April 5 graduation. "I didn't get caught until the ninth grade," he said later. His father, who worked as an undercover agent for the Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics, confronted him after finding drug paraphernalia, but decided not to tell his mother because it would be too hurtful. Afterwards, Walsh said, he went out with friends. "We went to the fair and I got stoned."

Walsh said he had been to drug treatment several times, unsuccessfully. A stint in jail was a sobering catalyst. Drug Court for Walsh meant redirecting a path that started before he was a teenager.

"Drug Court offered me a way to get sober," Walsh said, but added that the program doesn't clean up people's addictions for them.

"It's up to the participants to take control of their own lives."

Walsh's mother accompanied him to graduation. Walsh choked back tears as he wished his father could have seen him graduate. The retired lawman died 10 days before the Drug Court graduation. Walsh said he knew his father was proud of him.

Rosita Little's 7-year-old son, her mother and her grandparents came to her June 28 graduation from Hinds County Drug Court. Little, 29, of Jackson, now has custody of her 7-year-old son, and she hopes to later regain custody of her 14-year-old son.

"I did not know where my children were for three years because I was on drugs," Little said. "I had nothing to live for."

She was arrested on a crack cocaine possession charge two years ago in Jackson. She landed in Drug Court.

Little summed up her Drug Court experience for program participants and their friends and families: "It has helped me get my life back together and have my child back with me."

Little knows all too well about sliding back into the same associations. Little said her first try at rehabilitation failed. Drug Court helped her



Brian Walsh speaks to Drug Court graduates as Presiding Justice William L. Waller Jr. and Judge Mike Parker look on.

shed the old friendships and haunts that had kept her hooked.

"That was my big problem. I didn't change my people, places and things. I stayed with the same people," Little said after the ceremony.

She worked as a stripper, then lost that job and lived in the streets. "I would have died out there," Little said. "I was not eating, not sleeping, doing whatever I had to do to get another piece of dope."

Little now works as a house manager at a transitional residential facility for recovering women drug addicts who have been through the criminal justice system. The work puts to use her experience of hitting rock-bottom as a drug addict. "I empathize with them. I sympathize with them. I let them know it can be done. I'm doing it," she said.

"I started drinking and smoking when I was nine years old. It went from that to weed and pills and powder and crystal," Little said, the words pouring out in a torrent. Powder cocaine was her drug of choice, then she was introduced to crack. "I never looked back."

When asked his drug of choice, Walsh said, "I've never done heroin. I've done everything else. I was trying to trade cocaine for morphine when I got busted."

Walsh was already on probation for a string of misdemeanors and a couple of felony counts. His drug addiction, his mouth and his temper were a volatile combination. Then, on Sept. 7, 2002, a Hinds County sheriff's deputy arrested him on a drug possession charge in Byram. He called his wife from jail. She told him his belongings

OFFICIALS TELL GRADUATES TO GIVE BACK TO THE COMMUNITY



Rep. Alyce Griffin Clarke listens as Sen. Cindy Hyde-Smith addresses Hinds County Drug Court graduates.

would be waiting for him on the curb. He signed the divorce papers in jail.

Three weeks after he was arrested, he landed in Hinds County Judge Mike Parker's court. Judge Parker sentenced him to six months in jail. After Walsh served the jail time, he got an opportunity to participate in Drug Court.

Judge Parker confessed that he pegged Walsh's chances of making it through the two-year program as slim. "I felt he was just marking time, he wasn't going to make it to graduation. He proved us wrong," Judge Parker said, noting that Walsh emerged as a leader among his peers in Drug Court. "This is a guy who got a second chance and has taken full advantage of it."

Walsh earned his general equivalency degree (GED).

The sheet metal company that fired him four years ago for fighting rehired him. His girlfriend accompanied him to Drug Court graduation.

"I'm happy leading a simple life," Walsh said. "I'm staying clean and sober and living one day at a time."

Sixty-four people have graduated from the Hinds County Drug Court since it began in March 2000.

Mississippi Supreme Court Presiding Justice William L. Waller Jr., keynote speaker for the April 5 graduation, challenged graduates to reach beyond their own lives and give back to the community through service to others. Justice Waller said, "Those who are successful generally are those who reach out in selfless service....Take it to the next level of selfless service."

At the June 28 graduation,



Rosita Little shares a proud moment with her grandparents after her graduation from Drug Court.

Judge Parker welcomed Rep. Alyce Griffin Clarke of Jackson and Sen. Cindy Hyde-Smith of Brookhaven, who have been committed to the creation and funding of state drug court programs. Legislation adopted in 2003 is known as the Alyce Griffin Clarke Drug Court Act, in honor of her continued work to establish drug courts in Mississippi. The statute established a framework for drug courts statewide. Sen. Hyde-Smith sponsored legislation in 2004 which created a funding mechanism for drug court programs through special assessments on fines for felony crimes, misdemeanors, traffic offenses, driving under the influence of alcohol, game and fish law violations and litter law violations.

Rep. Clarke said, "We are blessed because we have

come a long way."

Sen. Hyde-Smith, keynote speaker for the graduation, recalled the difficulties of getting legislative approval in a lean budget year.

"We funded it. We provided the program for you. You can stick to it and make it happen, or you can backslide and be back," Hyde-Smith told the graduates.

Hyde-Smith reminded graduates to break with old friends and old habits. "Some people we have to love from a distance," she said.

Hyde-Smith urged Drug Court participants to find spiritual support in church and to give to others not just with words but with deeds. "Think more of other people than you do yourself and be part of something that is bigger than yourself," she said. "Do what's right just because it's right."

14TH DISTRICT DRUG COURT PROVIDES TESTING TO AREA SCHOOLS

Gov. Haley Barbour appointed Michael M. Taylor to fill the vacancy in the 14th District created by Judge Keith Starrett's appointment to the federal court. Judge Taylor is committed to the drug court programs and is working very diligently toward drug court goals in Lincoln, Pike and Walthall counties.

Judge Taylor and the drug court team feel that an aggressive random drug testing policy is a key factor in monitoring participants. Particip-

ants must call in seven days a week for testing information. Many participants have said that not knowing when they will be tested helps them resist drug cravings.

The program's latest venture is providing random drug testing in McComb and North Pike junior and high schools. Both public school districts have adopted a very strong drug testing policy. It is hoped that these efforts will make it easier for students to just say "NO".

Eight people graduated from the 14th District Drug Court program Aug. 1, and 50 people were recognized for moving up in the program. The 27 advancing to Phase 3 have paid \$74,083.87 in fines and restitution and \$20,850 in Drug Court fees.

At the time of graduation, 176 people were enrolled. Six drug-free babies have been born to participants currently enrolled, and four women are waiting to give birth.



Circuit Judge Michael Taylor

ADAMS COUNTY ADULT DRUG COURT CELEBRATES 1ST ANNIVERSARY



Circuit Judge Lillie Blackmon Sanders

Participants in the Adams County Adult Drug Court celebrated the one-year anniversary of the program May 18 with a program at Pilgrim Baptist Church in Natchez.

Two of the original participants are on target to complete the 18-month program on time, said Circuit Judge Lillie Blackmon Sanders.

She said proudly of the 25 enrolled at that time: "None of them have committed another crime since they have been in Drug Court. We

recalled one man who celebrated getting a new job. "He ended up celebrating too much" and used drugs. "I almost cried," she said.

"We are going to beat the odds. We are going to clean up everybody," she said.

The Adams County Drug Court does its work with existing court staff and volunteers. Judge Sanders, who led the effort to create Drug Court, gives the staff and volunteers credit for making the program work.

"It's our Drug Court. We are a team. It belongs to all of us," she said.

CHIEF JUSTICE ADDRESSES ADAMS COUNTY YOUTH DRUG COURT

Mississippi Supreme Court Chief Justice James W. Smith Jr. told graduates of the Adams County Youth Drug Court to set goals for themselves and to press on after setbacks.

Chief Justice Smith was

one step ahead always. Never accept a setback in life as an ultimate defeat."

"People grow fat and lazy when they have no challenges in life. You may fail again. It could be this year, or it could be later this week,

Don't look back. Look one step ahead always. Never accept a setback in life as an ultimate defeat."

"People grow fat and lazy when they have no challenges in life. You may fail again. It could be this year, or

it could be later this week, but don't let that stop you."

The May graduates bring the total to 11 who have completed the program since it began in 2001. None of the graduates have gotten into

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JUDGE SAYS DRUG COURT BROUGHT ABOUT CHANGES

The explosion of crystal methamphetamine offenses in George and Greene counties forced Circuit Judge Kathy King Jackson to rethink how she dealt with drug offenders.

The prison sentences she had sought as a prosecutor and handed out as a judge didn't deter offenders.

She admits she wasn't instantly sold on Drug Court. But with the results she has seen in the treatment-oriented program, she counts her work as a Drug Court judge as the most rewarding thing she's ever done.

On May 12, Judge Jackson and the 19th District Drug Court staff exchanged hugs and handshakes with the program's first nine graduates. The nine, outfitted in yellow corsages and boutonnieres, bore little resemblance to the people whose addiction landed them in the

criminal justice system more than two years ago. But their own lives weren't all that changed.

"They changed me," Judge Jackson told a crowd that packed the George County Courthouse in Lucedale. "I look over at the nine and it's like they are my own kids. They are my first litter, and probably my best."

Former Attorney General Mike Moore, a law school classmate of Jackson's who worked with her when both were assistant district attorneys, urged her to create a drug court.

At the graduation, he said, "My tribute to her is this is a model program."

The graduates are parents of 21 children. Moore said, "Twenty-one children's lives are better off. Their future is much better off because of what has happened today."

Judge Jackson said the



Former Attorney General Mike Moore praises Judge Kathy King Jackson's work with Drug Court. Graduates are in background.

graduates also looked beyond themselves and gave to others in need. "They adopted two families at Christmas, families with children that wouldn't have had anything except for these people."

Graduates paid \$38,586 in fines and fees and did more than 1,800 hours of community service work. They landscaped George and Greene County Courthouse property and cleaned the

buildings and grounds, put a roof on a Boy Scout building, and painted school playground equipment and Justice Court offices. They painted and repainted the county-owned building they used for Drug Court.

"That is saying a lot for people who, when they started the program, didn't have a job and didn't want a job," Judge Jackson said.

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ADAMS COUNTY YOUTH DRUG COURT, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

trouble after completing the program, said Youth Drug Court Director Marc Taylor.

High school diplomas, General Education Development certificates, college enrollment and jobs mark their successes. Taylor said, "We help youth with their education by offering GED and tutoring and requiring at least a 'C' average in school to comply with the program."

It is the state's oldest juvenile drug court. It started accepting participants in 2001. At the time of the graduation, 37 teens were enrolled.

The program takes at least nine months to complete. Many participants are sent to drug treatment. All face frequent, random drug testing.

Taylor said the program seeks to make a lasting dif-

ference for the teens. "It's a very strict program. It holds them accountable and it teaches responsibility. It kind of gives them an inner compass that they take with them," Taylor said.

"We work not only with the youth, but with their families to educate and support healthier, sober lifestyles at home. Our youth attend support group weekly and the

parents or guardians have their support group weekly also," Taylor said.

"Ultimately, that's going to help our county. One of the benefits of the Youth Drug Court is we can identify potential drug dependency early. It helps interrupt that disease process of addiction and arrest it," said Taylor, who is a licensed professional counselor.

DRUG COURT EXPANSION PLANNED FOR YOUTH, CITY, & JUSTICE

Mississippi drug courts are seeing growth in circuit and youth courts as well as expansion into justice and municipal courts.

Thirteen drug courts are in operation across the state, and seven are in the planning stages. The most recent additions include the DeSoto County Youth Court, which began accepting participants in March, and the 9th Circuit Drug Court of Sharkey, Issaquena and Warren counties, which began accepting participants in May. Drug courts in the planning stages include the 16th and 21st Circuit Courts, Forrest and Rankin County Youth Courts, Hinds County Justice Court, and Jackson and Columbia Municipal Courts.

Rankin County Judge Thomas H. Broome plans to have the Youth Drug Court in operation in the fall. Judge Broome and seven members of the Drug Court team have attended two training sessions, with a third scheduled in September.

Judge Broome, who presides over all Rankin County Youth Court cases, said the prevalence of alcohol and drug abuse among the juveniles he sees in court has convinced him of the need for a specialized court to deal with those problems. Juvenile drug courts use early intervention and intensive supervision to deter drug use and prevent criminal behavior.

Judge Broome said, "In a large portion of the delinquency cases, those children have corresponding drug and alcohol issues. By implementing the juvenile drug court, we believe we will provide more effective alternatives to those children other than detention."

The Rankin County Youth Drug Court planning team took the acronym "SAFE," from mission statement key words "supervision," "accountability," "family" and "effective."

Judge Broome said, "We hope to help those youths who are referred to Youth

Drug Court to lead a safe and sober lifestyle and to enhance the quality of their lives as well as the lives of their families."

Hinds County Justice Court Judge Nicki Martinson Boland is leading efforts to form a drug court in Justice Court. Judge Boland said she wants to create a problem-solving court that will address the alcohol and drug problems that are underlying factors in many of the misdemeanor cases that come before her court. Addressing those causes may prevent misdemeanor offenders from graduating to felony crimes.

Judge Boland said, "I think drug and alcohol abuse is a pervasive common denominator in most of the misdemeanors committed by the defendants in Justice Court. What I would like to see happen is intervention. I believe the cost savings to the community and the county and the state would be phenomenal."

Judge Boland is already incorporating the treatment



Judge Nicki Martinson Boland

element of drug courts in some of her cases.

Hinds County Court Judge Mike Parker, who presides over the felony Drug Court, as well as members of his staff have provided assistance to the Justice Court program.

"We've had the good fortune to have his experience," Judge Boland said. "He's blazed the trail for us."

Judge Parker said, "If drug cases can be addressed in this way at that level, then I'm confident we would see...a lot fewer cases at the felony level. To me, it's the best money that's spent in the criminal justice system."

GEORGE AND GREENE COUNTY DRUG COURT, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

Judge Jackson started the 19th Circuit Drug Court program in George and Greene Counties Nov. 1, 2002. The program was expanded into Jackson County March 1, 2004. At the time of the May 12 graduation, 109 people were enrolled.

poured time and dedication into the program.

Drug Court Coordinator Joanne Byrd, on call all the time, "did more counseling for these people than all the counselors and doctors and psychiatrists put together," Judge Jackson said.

and an air conditioner. Drug Court staff poured time and dedication into the program.

Drug Court Coordinator Joanne Byrd, on call all the time, "did more counseling for these people than all the counselors and doctors and psychiatrists put together,"

Judge Jackson said.

Court Administrator Pat Smith taught them grammar. "She had them writing limericks."

"None of this would have been possible without everyone pulling together," Judge Jackson said.

FELONY DRUG COURT FOUNDER SAYS YOUTH COURTS MOST EFFECTIVE

U.S. District Judge Keith Starrett said that the most effective drug courts are juvenile drug courts.

Judge Starrett was the guest speaker June 27 when the first three teens graduated from the Madison County Juvenile Drug Court.

"You get the most benefit from a juvenile Drug Court," Judge Starrett told graduates, other teens enrolled in the program, parents, law officers and court staff. "When you do get into Drug Court, you have the opportunity to turn your lives around."

One of the graduates echoed that. "Drug Court literally changed my life and I'm really grateful I had that opportunity," said the 17-year-old, who is college-bound this fall after having scored 32 on the American College Test.

Another Drug Court graduate who had dropped out of school got a General Education Development (GED) de-

gree. Another was excused from attending the graduation ceremony because he had just started working at a full-time job. His mother accepted his diploma.

Judge Starrett told participants that hard work is the key to success, not just in employment but in every aspect of life. He praised them for their efforts which brought them to graduation.

"You need to work hard to make the best decisions that you can make. But it doesn't end there. You need to work even harder to make those decisions right," Judge Starrett said. "Discipline is the bridge between goals and accomplishments. There is no substitute for hard work. Commitment is what it takes."

He told them that when they fail, try again because no experience is wasted. "All of us are going to stumble and fall and make mistakes in our lives, but you don't



U.S. District Judge Keith Starrett addresses Madison County Juvenile Drug Court graduates. County Judge William Agin is seated at right.

need to be beaten down by it," he said. "People make mistakes. Get up and dust yourself off and get moving."

Judge Starrett said extra work by Madison County Judge William Agin made the Madison County Juvenile Drug Court a reality. "Judge Agin didn't have to do this. It takes extra time, extra work."

Judge Agin credited the

work of the Drug Court team and the support of local governments and the community for making the program successful. The Drug Court team, which was created in 2002, includes the judge, a licensed professional counselor certified in drug and alcohol counseling, a prosecutor, a public defender, law enforcement

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JACKSON COUNTY DRUG COURT DOES COMMUNITY SERVICE

Participants in the Jackson County Drug Court took to the streets in Pascagoula on Saturday, May 21, to pick up litter on U.S. 90 during National Drug Court Month. The work was part of their continuing community service.

Twenty people are enrolled in Circuit Judge Robert Krebs' Jackson County Drug Court program. His Drug Court group began meeting weekly

in October 2004.

Circuit Judge Kathy King Jackson, who started the Drug Court program in the 19th Circuit Court District in George and Greene counties in November 2002, began meeting with other participants in Jackson County Drug Court in March 2004.

Drug Court participants must perform at least eight hours of community service

each month, Judge Krebs said. Participants have painted, cleaned and served food at a local food pantry. They painted the building used by Alcoholics Anonymous, and they did painting, plumbing and other repairs at three area churches.

Drug Court accepts people charged with drug possession as well as some charged with embezzlement, prescription

forgery and other crimes rooted in drug addiction. The Drug Court seeks to break the cycle of addiction that drives people to commit crimes.

Judge Krebs said, "It's a lifestyle change for the better and they come to realize that it is important to be a responsible citizen, to have a job, to take care of your children and to contribute something back to the community."

MADCP HOLDS FIRST STATEWIDE TRAINING CONFERENCE

More than 175 judges, court staff, law enforcement and corrections officers and treatment providers attended two days of drug court training at the Pearl River Resort in Choctaw. The Jan. 27-28 Drug Court Training Conference, sponsored by the Mississippi Association of Drug Court Professionals in conjunction with the National Drug Court Institute, is expected to become an annual event.

The conference theme, "A New Wave in Mississippi," captured the excitement of participants as information was provided for the many disciplines involved in drug courts. The conference surpassed all expectations for attendance, and the quality of speakers provided by the National Association was exceptional. Many thanks to

all who were instrumental in the success of this first conference. Conference evaluations provided valuable insight regarding topics of interest for the next conference, which is planned for May 3-5, 2006, at Grand Casino Oasis in Gulfport.

At the January conference, Karen Freeman-Wilson, chief executive officer of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals and executive director of the National Drug Court Institute, topped a list of distinguished seminar faculty that included national and local experts.

Freeman-Wilson, former attorney general of Indiana and a former Gary, Ind., drug court judge, said the offender profile in courts nationwide points to the increasing need to address the issues of drug and alcohol addiction.

"A majority of the offenders we are dealing with in the criminal justice context are drug offenders," Freeman-Wilson said. "They are being released. They are going to live next door to me. They are going to live next door to you and throughout the city. We have a vested interest."

"What we have seen is that drug courts outperform virtually all other strategies that have been attempted for drug-involved offenders," she said.

Pharmacologist Kenneth Robinson, President of Correctional Counseling Inc. of Memphis, said, "Addiction really is a brain disease... Treatment is a process, and to change someone whose neurochemistry has been affected takes years...It takes genuine perseverance and commitment to see the change through."

"Very few people can stop on a dime. If they stumble and you throw them out, what does it reinforce? 'Well, I couldn't have made it anyway,'" Robinson said.

Treatment alone can't fix the problem of addiction because those referred to treatment don't stick with the program, Freeman-Wilson said. More than half of those referred to drug treatment don't show up. She quoted studies which show 40 to 80 percent drop out in the first three months, and 90 percent drop out within a year.

It takes coercion that judges can exert with the threat of jail to make people stick with treatment and benefit from rehabilitation, she said. "You can stop using drugs or you can lose your job...You can do the program or you can go to jail."

MADISON COUNTY JUVENILE DRUG COURT: CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

representatives and a retired dentist who volunteers his time.

The first participant entered the program in May 2004. He was one of the graduates. Eighteen teens were enrolled in the program at the time of graduation.

Drug Court Counselor Cara Rios said, "I am proud of each and every one of you. It is an accomplishment just to be in the Drug Court."

The program accepts participants ages 12 -17 who have been referred to the

Phase 1 is six months of weekly court sessions and weekly drug testing. Phase 2 lasts at least three months; participants attend court sessions twice a month, meet with the case manager and are drug-tested twice a month. Phase 3 lasts three months; participants go to court, meet with the case manager and are drug tested monthly.

One graduate's mother said she hopes juvenile drug courts spread to other juris-

court, meet with the case manager and are drug tested monthly.

One graduate's mother said she hopes juvenile drug courts spread to other jurisdictions. "There are a lot of kids and a lot of parents who do need help."

Three juvenile drug courts operate in the state and two more are planned. Adams County was the first. Madison County was second.

Judge Agin said, "We are grateful to Adams County and

to the help they have given us to tailor our program to juveniles."

Judge Agin said he also looked to Judge Starrett for help. "Judge Starrett is the one person most responsible for the drug court concept in the state of Mississippi. He was the inspiration for me when I wondered those many times if, how and when we would ever get our Drug Court in operation. He told me, 'Just do it, and the details will take care of themselves.'"

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USM WILL CREATE PROGRAM EVALUATION MODEL

The Administrative Office of Courts has approved an offer by the University of Southern Mississippi to study a sample of drug courts and devise a model for drug court evaluations.

The State Drug Courts Advisory Committee is in the early stages of planning for a statewide evaluation of the 13 drug courts. The USM Department of Administration of Justice, formerly the Department of Criminal Justice, has offered to develop a drug court program evaluation model. USM has served as the state's Statistical Analysis Center for criminal justice programs since October 2000.

AOC Director Kevin Lackey said the study is intended to show ways for drug courts to improve their services to participants and the public, and also to provide policymakers with an evaluation of the economic and rehabilitative benefits of drug courts.

AOC is also negotiating a contract with a private company to provide a case management system for every drug court in the state. Work is expected to begin in Octo-

ber to tailor a core case management program to fit Mississippi drug courts. A target date has not yet been set to begin using the case management system.

AOC Project Manager Joey Craft said, "What we hope to accomplish is collection of uniform data from every drug court in the state. That will then give us better information upon which to conduct a statewide evaluation."

The USM study will be the broadest examination of Mississippi drug courts undertaken so far. The only other systematic evaluation of a Mississippi drug court to date has been a study of the 14th Circuit Court District of Lincoln, Pike and Walthall counties, the oldest drug court program in the state. The Mississippi Crime and Justice Research Unit of the Social Science Research Center at Mississippi State University issued a report and recommendations for the 14th Circuit Drug Court in May.

Lisa Nored, associate professor of criminal justice and director of the Statistical Analysis Center at USM, is

working out details of the larger proposed drug court study. Her preliminary proposal calls for spending eight months gathering data from and conducting interviews with staff and judges of six drug courts yet to be selected. Researchers would spend an additional four months analyzing the data and preparing a report of their findings.

The study is expected to examine the quality of data collected and maintained by the AOC and individual drug courts, and to collect additional data. The Statistical Analysis Center proposes to examine the operation and administration of drug courts, programming alternatives, costs associated with the operation of drug courts, cost savings to the state, demographics and prior history of drug court participants, and the recidivism rate of drug court participants.

The Statistical Analysis Center is seeking a grant from the Bureau of Justice Statistics to fund the study. No costs will be incurred by the AOC or the drug courts.

Mark your calendars!

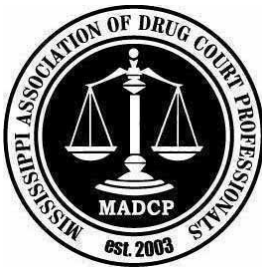
**The Second Annual MADCP Training Conference
is scheduled for May 3—5, 2006,
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